

Spring 2004



Refuge Reporter

Happenings at Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge

Volume 7, Issue 2

Green Point ELC Will Host Dioxin Demonstration in April

By Becky Goche, Park Ranger

Green Point will become the temporary home for the EPA's Superfund Innovative Technology Evaluation (SITE) Program from April 23 to May 5. The goal of the SITE Program is to conduct performance verification studies and to promote acceptance of innovative technologies that may be used to achieve long-term protection of human health and environment. Part of this program is to evaluate technologies that sample, detect, monitor, or measure hazardous and toxic substances in soil, water, and sediment samples. In this case, dioxin will be studied. Conventional methods of determining dioxins are time-consuming and costly. The use of simple, rapid, and cost effective screening methods will allow field personnel to rapidly assess the extent of dioxin contamination

at a site. No remediation actions are considered during this process.

Several technology developers will participate in the demonstration at Green Point. Their operations will be housed in 7 or 8 mobile labs and trailers in the parking lot. The developers will test field technologies that can be used for the rapid measurement of dioxins in soil and sediment. Their results will be compared to conventional laboratory-based methods. The demonstration will evaluate the results of over 200 analyses of environmental samples obtained from dioxin contaminated sites in Michigan and across the country.

A Visitors' Day is planned for either the morning of April 28 or 29. More information will be available at a later date.

Inside this issue:

<i>Lakescaping for Wildlife</i>	2
<i>Friends Group Election</i>	3
<i>Bridgeport Bottomlands</i>	3

Special Points:

- *International Migratory Bird Day is the second Saturday in May. At the Refuge, we will be celebrating this occasion with a self-guided auto tour on May 8 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Keep in mind that this tour may be cancelled if the road and/or weather conditions are not favorable.*
- *Kids' Free Fishing Day is set for June 12. We will need lots of volunteers to help!*

Detour on Curtis Road due to Bridge Construction

Curtis Road remains closed to traffic just west of the Refuge Headquarters due to bridge construction. The road was closed in October, 2003, and will remain that way until later this spring or summer. Visitors can still get to the Ferguson Bayou trails on the west end of Curtis Road by following the detour. From Curtis the detour goes north one mile on Mower

Road. Turns west onto Moore Road for one mile and then goes south for one mile on Creswell Road. This will bring you back to Curtis Road beyond the bridge construction. Just head west on Curtis Road and go about two miles to the parking lot. If you have any questions, please call the Refuge at (989) 777-5930.

Lakescaping for Wildlife

By Rich McAvinchey, Biological Technician

Many of you have already developed a habitat plan for your property and are happily creating your personal wildlife refuges. You've added cover, food and water sources, brush and rock piles, and maybe even a snake hibernation mound. You've probably reduced or eliminated pesticide and fertilizer use on your property. If so, you have certainly been able to watch more wildlife species than you ever saw before. For those of you living along the shore of a lake, there are additional stewardship practices you'll want to plan and develop.

Lakes are naturally very rich habitats, with abundant native plants and wildlife, and clean water. Michigan is defined by our lakes. Unfortunately, many lakeshore owners have eliminated the native vegetation on shore and replaced it with labor-intensive, chemical-dependent bluegrass lawns that offer little wildlife value. These "rugs" readily transport fertilizer and pesticides directly into the lake, polluting waters and increasing algal blooms. Some lakeshore owners also remove aquatic plants in the water, considering them unsightly weeds. This is often followed by increased bank erosion and efforts to control it. These conditions provide little habitat for wildlife species that previously lived around the lake, but they attract certain species of wildlife such as Canada geese that people now consider a nuisance in that context. Suburban lawn landscape is a poor and ecologically dysfunctional substitute for native lakeshore habitats.

If you are in the lakeshore lawn habit, you can restore your lakeshore and protect the waters that you moved there for. First evaluate your situation, and decide what changes to make immediately. A few quick changes to make are 1) keep oil off the driveway by proper vehicle maintenance and cleaning up spills quickly, and **never** dump used oil on the ground; 2) mow lawns high (2 ½ to 3 inches) and frequently, leaving clippings on the lawn but not blown into the lake or street; 3) keep leaves raked up to keep them out of lakes and storm drains; 4) be conservative and careful using detergents on your auto or house, washing cars on lawn rather than the driveway; 5) keep your septic system properly maintained; 6) clean up pet waste as soon as possible to keep bacteria and excess nutrients out of the water; 7) learn to identify and control invasive plants.

To restore your lakeshore to a more natural and wildlife-friendly habitat, decide how much lawn you really need and develop the rest into outdoor rooms, shrub and tree zones, formal or informal native plant gardens, and a buffer zone extending down to the shoreline. The buffer zone includes an upland zone extending 25 to 100 feet or

more uphill from the shoreline and an aquatic zone that extends out into the water as far as vegetation will grow. On shore, the buffer zone vegetation can be mostly herbaceous, using grasses, sedges and wildflowers, or mostly trees and shrubs, with native herbaceous growth beneath. You can plant the buffer to commercially available species, or in some situations you can simply stop mowing and allow native plants to recolonize, keeping watch for invasives such as buckthorn or purple loosestrife. Restoring your lakeshore habitat recreates travel corridors for wildlife between the uplands and the lake.

A great source of information for transforming your lakeshore habitat is *Lakescaping for Wildlife and Water Quality* by Carrol Henderson, Carolyn Dindorf and Fred Rozumalski, published by Minnesota DNR. As you develop your lakeshore, keep in mind that it is most effective to restore larger blocks of shoreline habitat, so try to convince your lakeside neighbors or your lake association of the value of these practices. You can all spend more time fishing or canoeing rather than mowing lawn.



An example of the different plant zones near a lake. Taken from the book, "Lakescaping for Wildlife and Water Quality."

Friends Group Elects New Board Members

By Richard Hodge, Friends Board of Directors

In January, 2004, Friends members elected board members. Thank you to Joe Davilia and Dan Patillo for their dedicated service on the Board of Directors! Following is a brief biography of the elected board members.

Gary Dankert (Re-elected) - Gary has worked at Allied Tool and Machine in Saginaw for 30 years. He is a former President of the Chesaning Area Conservation Club and currently serves on their Board of Directors. He is active with Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) and serves on its Board of Directors, is Chairman of the MUCC District 10 and the MUCC Fisheries Committee as well as their representative for the Great Lakes Discovery Center. Gary is Chairman of the Shiawassee Flats Advisory Council, too. He is a hunter education instructor and serves as an advisor to the Michigan Youth Hunter Education Challenge program.

Herman Rindhage (New) - Herman was born and raised in Saginaw. He is a World War II veteran. He is active with the Saginaw County Historical Society, the Saginaw Voyageurs, and the Bridgeport Historical Society.

Janet Martineau (New) - Janet has worked at *The Saginaw News* since 1967 and is currently the Arts and Entertainment Editor. She is on the board for the Chipewewa Nature Center in Midland. Janet is an avid birder and is a member of the Saginaw Valley Audubon Society. She is an advanced Master Gardener and serves as the historian for the Saginaw Valley Master Gardener's Association.

Board Meetings

Board meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at Green Point ELC. Everyone is invited to attend.

For more information about the Friends group or to become a member, contact the Friends of Shiawassee NWR, P.O. Box 20129, Saginaw, MI 48602. New Friends membership brochures are available at the Refuge Headquarters and at Green Point.

"Thank you to Joe Davilia and Dan Patillo for their dedicated service on the Board of Directors!"

Bridgeport Bottomlands

By Chuck Hoover, Friends Board of Directors

It was late January with a cold northeast wind bringing a chill of 10 degrees above zero, when Ed DeVries was a guide for Dick Vonberg and me. We headed for the "bottomlands" of the new refuge property at the proposed site for the new Great Lakes Discovery Center at Bridgeport. Our purpose was to hike the area and scout a proposed route for an interpretive trail system.

We started out in the foot deep snow, following the existing trail to the fishing dock site. Expecting a desolate winter landscape, I was amazed to find the area saturated with the tracks of moving wildlife. Deer were everywhere, a coyote marked his trail along a low ridge, and the trees were full of woodpeckers. Ed spied a hawk and showed the little tail mark in a mouse trail. If it is this nice in the cold of winter with the hum of the freeway in the distance, what promise of the abundant wildlife awaits us with the magic of the summer forest?

The bottomlands are basically flat with numerous flood channels crisscrossing the area between low ridges. The

terrain changes from thick brush with fallen trees to open forest, from buttonbush lowlands on through an open field of grass, all with the Cass River flowing along the southern edge.

Our concept for the Interpretive Trail system is to build a basic "loop trail" with bridges, boardwalks, and culverts, to cross the flood channels and even edge a portion of the Cass River. We would then have a series of separate "spur trails" off the loop to observation sites along the ridges. This would allow visitors to watch wildlife while not being disturbed by other visitors walking on the main trail loop. The next step is to develop our "Trail Planning Document" and to request a proposal to design the basic trail system. At the same time, we can plan a work day to remove the trash items that floated into our woods on the spring floods. This is going to be a very nice place!

Shiawassee NWR
6975 Mower Rd.
Saginaw, MI 48601
Phone: 989-777-5930
Fax: 989-777-9200
Hours: M - F, 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Refuge Reporter is published quarterly
by the Friends of Shiawassee NWR.

We're on the web!
[Http://midwest.fws.gov/
shiawassee](http://midwest.fws.gov/shiawassee)



*Celebrating a
Century
of Conservation!*



New Refuge Employee Is Back Home in Michigan

by Mary Ann Gillette, Administrative Technician

I joined the Shiawassee staff on December 1, 2003, as the Administrative Technician. I was not fortunate enough to meet my predecessor, Shirley Adams, but I have spoken with her many times over the phone and she has been extremely helpful in my transition. She is still getting acclimated to her new job in South Dakota.

I have been with the Federal Government for 17 years, working for the Department of Defense and the Department of The Treasury. I received my Associate of Science Degree from New Hampshire College, and attended three additional years in the Florida University system, majoring in Business Administration. I lived in Florida for the past 17 years and my husband and I moved "back home" to Midland, Michigan in December, 2000. I actually missed the snow! My two sons opted to remain in the warm sunshine and beautiful beaches of the South, which I vow to visit at least twice a year. Everyone at the Refuge and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service has been wonderful. I will do as much as I can to be a productive member of the staff and make a difference in the efficiency of the financial and administrative functions of the Refuge. I am glad to be here and look forward to the events of 2004!

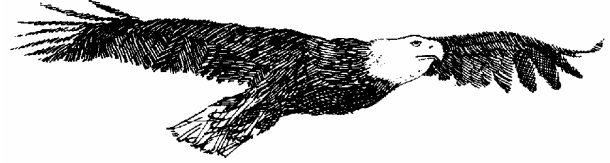


Calendar of Events

2004 Refuge Photo Contest

September 1, 2003 to August 31, 2004

It's not too early to start planning for the 2004 Photo Contest! Visit the Refuge and take some photos and then enter our 2004 Photo Contest. Up to 3 entries total per person may be submitted.



Friends of Shiawassee Board of Directors Meetings

March 10, April 14, May 12, June 9 and August 11, 7:00 p.m.

Green Point Environmental Learning Center (ELC), 3010 Maple Street, Saginaw

Meet the second Monday of each month.

Pre and Early American History

March 11, 2004, 7:00 p.m.

Green Point ELC

Jeff Sommer, archaeologist with the Historical Society of Saginaw County, will be the featured speaker at the Friends of Shiawassee NWR General Meeting.

International Migratory Bird Day Celebration

May 8, 2004, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. – Weather Permitting

Auto tour will start at the parking lot at the west end of Curtis Road

Explore the bird life of the Refuge from the comforts of your own vehicle! The Friends of Shiawassee NWR will have refreshments and other items for sale. Please note that the auto tour may be cancelled if the road and/or weather conditions do not permit it.

Grand Opening of “The Trail Head” Bookstore

May 22, 2004

Cass River Unit in Bridgeport Township

The Friends of Shiawassee NWR are planning a fun-filled day to kick-off the opening of their bookstore, The Trail Head. Please contact the Refuge or the Friends for more information as the date gets closer.



Looking Ahead – Mark These Dates

June 12 – Kids' Free Fishing Day

June 17 – Second Annual Friends Family Cookout

June 23 & 24 – Summer Discovery Camp for 4- to 6-year-olds.

July 13 to 15 – Jr. Refuge Manager Academy for 3rd and 4th graders.

September 11 & 12 – Refuge Open House Weekend